

## ABSTRACT

### SOCIAL WORK

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AN EXPLORATORY DESCRIPTIVE STUDY REGARDING PERCEPTIONS OF  
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG BATTERED  
AND NONBATTERED WOMEN

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This study examined relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a statistical relationship between the levels of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women.

The study utilized an exploratory descriptive research design. The sample consisted of sixteen battered women and seventeen nonbattered women. The analysis consisted of percentages, frequencies, and a chi-square cross-tabulation analysis. The results indicated that the two groups were similar in their levels of relationship satisfaction. The chi-square analysis found a statistically significant relationship satisfaction among the two groups. In conclusion, the study found that battered women experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction than nonbattered women.

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AND NONBATTERED WOMEN

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In all parts of the world, domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon among women of all racial, economic and social strata. Until recently, it has been both legally and socially accepted as the cultural norm. Subsequently, this tragic epidemic is still largely unacknowledged by some segments of society. The first research in the field of domestic violence was in the area of child abuse. However, by the late 1970s, the concentration shifted to investigating women as spousal abuse victims and questioned why they were more vulnerable to violence than their male counterparts. As a result, a substantial amount has been learned about why women continue to succumb to violence at the hands of their intimate partners.

Limited research studies have indicated that many battered women stay in their abusive relationship in a hope that the batterer will change and become the ideal partner. Other studies have indicated that battered women, more than others, are likely to hold traditional views about love, romance and relationships (Martin, 1976; White, 1994). The literature on relationship satisfaction among battered women is greatly underdeveloped. Therefore, the subject to be investigated is an exploratory and descriptive study of perceptions of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women.

Although a great deal of research studies have revealed that battered women tend to put their partner's needs before their own, scant attention has been devoted to the study of relationship satisfaction among battered women. This widespread problem is apparent as social work practitioners encounter battered women in nearly all areas of social work practice. As practitioners begin to conceptualize the importance of how battered women perceive satisfaction in their relationship, they can begin to formulate new coping intervention strategies and treatment modalities that address domestic violence.

Practitioners must become knowledgeable and adequately skilled to provide services to this ever-growing population. The lack of information in this area suggests the need for more investigation on how battered women view relationship satisfaction. The dearth of information on the subject is worth investigating. To achieve a better understanding of how battered women perceive relationship satisfaction, this present study will explore perceptions of relationship satisfaction among battered women studied in comparison to nonbattered women. As mentioned previously, the investigator hopes this investigation will provide a framework for social workers to develop effective treatment interventions for battered women and also for nonbattered women who experience distress in their intimate relationships. Further understanding of this phenomenon is crucial in working with the growing plight of battered women.

Despite the fact that many advances have been made in the study of battered women, it is still not clear how they perceive satisfaction in their abusive relationships. However, this study seeks to examine these significant variables of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women.

In reviewing the literature, thus far the issue has not been adequately addressed in the social work research body. This gap suggests that there is a need for more investigation on how battered women perceive relationship satisfaction in their intimate relations.

### Statement of the Problem

The study of how battered women perceive relationship satisfaction is a relatively new and sophisticated phenomenon that requires further study. The problem of violence against women in this society is highly prevalent and has occurred in epidemic proportions for generations. A conservative estimate indicates that there are 572, 000 reports by intimate partners (National Organization for Women, 1995). This research study will examine whether battered women perceive relationship satisfaction differently than nonbattered women. Domestic violence researchers have found that battered women who remain with their abusive partners appear to employ cognitive strategies that help them perceive their relationships in a positive light (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). Battered women false perceptions about their intimate relationships can have traumatic implications on their continued victimization. Faulty perceptions can prevent battered women from obtaining or achieving a life without violence.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this current investigation is to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women. Domestic violence cuts across all races, religions, classes and occupations (Coley & Beckett, 1988). The impact of domestic violence may

undermine a woman's feelings about how she perceives satisfaction in her relationship. Social workers must understand that there are factors to consider in determining relationship satisfaction among battered women. There is an extensive body of literature related to this phenomenon, but the occurrence of violence among women of color has not been adequately studied, particularly in examining relationship satisfaction. Social workers must be equipped to serve and enter into therapeutic relationships with battered women that will help them discover alternatives to their violent relationships. Furthermore, this study will enhance the clinician's own skills and development. They should acquire a greater knowledge base on domestic violence and its impact on women to provide effective treatment and available resources to this population. This research will provide social workers with a framework in which to understand and work with this population. It will also attempt to impart a basis for a meaningful assessment, intervention strategies, and treatment.

### Significance of the Study

This research becomes significant because it examines the battered woman's perspective as well as beginning to learn whether there is a relationship between domestic violence and relationship satisfaction, by collecting and analyzing specific data on a sample of battered and nonbattered women. Domestic violence can impact battered women's physical and emotional well-being. It is a significant issue to be researched. The literature indicates a negative relationship between domestic violence and life satisfaction (Cancian & Rubin, 1989).

It is imperative that social work practitioners take the lead in conducting research on domestic violence and examine its manifestations on women. Likewise, design programs that will recognize battered women's strengths and their right to self-determination. Social workers must be aware of all of the contributing factors related to relationship satisfaction exhibited by their clients for the purpose of safety, intervention, and prevention. The researcher hopes that this empirical research will benefit social workers and other professionals working with battered women.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter contains literature related to domestic violence, perception, and relationship satisfaction among battered women. It also discusses the major theoretical framework, and defines a list of terms that are relevant to this study. Finally, this chapter offers the hypothesis and related variables.

Violence against women is a major problem in contemporary U.S. society. It is one of the most underestimated and underreported crimes in this country. Domestic violence crosses all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic classes (Sands, 2001). Statistics reveal that a woman in this country is battered every nine seconds by a current or former partner (Georgia Department of Human Resources, 2000; American Medical Association, 1998). Every day four million women die as a result of domestic violence; this adds up to approximately 1,400 women a year (National Organization for Women [NOW], 1995). The number of women murdered by intimate partners exceeds the number of soldiers killed in the Vietnam War (NOW, 1995).

Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin (1997) maintained that there is no one universal definition of family violence. Domestic violence, spouse abuse, battering, wife-beating, conjugal violence, family violence and intimate violence are terms that have been used in the literature to describe the phenomena of violence committed against women by an intimate partner.

For the purpose of this study, the term domestic violence will be used interchangeably with intimate violence. Abel (2000) postulated that the term domestic violence applies to couples engaged in an intimate relationship inside or outside of marriage. Another domestic violence theorist defined spousal abuse as physical, sexual, and other forms of violence perpetrated by one married or cohabiting heterosexual partner against the other (Longres, 2000).

Two to four million women are beaten by their partner each year (The Council on Scientific Affairs, 1992). Further, studies on the prevalence of domestic violence suggest that from one-fifth to one-third of all women will be physically assaulted by a current or past intimate partner during their lifetime (The Council on Scientific Affairs, 1992). The National Black Women's Health Project (2001) has identified woman battering as being the number one leading cause of injury among women, accounting for more emergency room visits, auto accidents, muggings, rapes, and cancer deaths combined. These statistics are born out of the fact that approximately 170,000 violent acts committed against women are so severe that they are required to seek hospitalization (NOW, 1995). The researcher of this study acknowledges that men are sometimes victims of intimate violence. However, because 95 percent of all domestic violence in this country involves abuse of women, this research will focus on female victims of domestic violence (U.S Department of Justice Statistics, 1983).

### Historical Perspective

Throughout western history, violence against women has its roots in a patriarchal system dating back thousands of years. It is a system that has historically viewed women

as inherently inferior to men (Wilson, 1997). Gelles and Straus (1988) conducted the first epidemiological study on battered women in this country. These authors postulated that wife beating extends as far back as recorded history. Consequently, the acceptance of wife battering became a part of the American tradition through the borrowing of the English common law (Wilson, 1997). The "rule of thumb" law regulated conjugal crime, permitting a husband the right to physically beat this wife, provided the stick was no bigger than his thumb (Davidson, 1978). The routine beating of women primarily went unchallenged because the culture of masculinity in the United States encouraged the devaluation of women (Glick, Berman, et al., 2000). This tradition of male ownership and domination of women still exists in American culture today. Consistent with White (1994) and Walker (1979) maintained that many men today still believe that it is their right to rule their wives. Religion and law have supported this notion. Laws such as the rule of thumb do not exist today, however, the attitudes in which they were written and permitted still exist. Walker (1979) asserted that such laws seemed to perpetuate the historical notion of male supremacy. Despite recent statutory reforms, acceptance of abuse against women still remains embedded in operations of the social, political and legal systems (Gelles & Straus, 1988).

By the mid-nineteenth century, various states passed laws making wife beating a punishable crime. However, society as a whole was slower in recognizing partner abuse as a societal problem (Horton, 2000). Ewing and Aubrey (1987) suggested that many people adhere to myths about wife abuse, such as the belief that the battered woman is masochistic and solely responsible for the abuse she sustains. Walker (1979) rejected this common view by ascertaining that society tends to blame the battered woman for her

victimization. Thus, men are excused for violent crimes that they commit against women. She furthered maintained that blaming a woman for causing a man to batter her results in her continued shame, embarrassment, denial, and loss of self-esteem. In essence, the batterer feels justified in his violent behavior because society has fostered the idea that the abuse is the woman's fault (Walker, 1979).

In most cases, prior to the 1960s, battered women had no place to go to seek refuge. Shelters were nearly nonexistent, and social service agencies rarely provided battered women with the kind of support they needed (Wilson, 1997). Outraged at society's failure to address this problem, battered women advocates and activists began to take matters into their own hands. Inspired by the feminist movement, the birth of the battered women's movement emerged. In the 1970s, battered women in the United States began to speak out against domestic violence (Wilson, 1997). It was also during that time that Erin Prizzey opened a small advice center in London for women and children to come together with others in similar situations. The center rapidly turned into a place for women seeking shelter from abuse. Due to the overwhelming need, the center became the Chiswick Women's Aid. Prizzey went on to publish a book in 1974 called *Scream Quietly or The Neighbors Will Hear*. Her groundbreaking work introduced domestic violence as a public social problem.

By the end of the decade, shelters for battered women were founded throughout the country. Currently, there are more than 2,500 shelters and domestic violence hotlines nationwide. These shelters provide emergency shelter crisis intervention, referral services, community education and advocacy (Wilson, 1997). It was not until the 1980s that the system truly began to work on behalf of women. Subsequently, 47 states passed

domestic violence legislation. The new legislation mandated changes to protection orders and enabled warrantless arrests for misdemeanor assaults. It began also to recognize history of abuse as a legal defense for battered women who killed their abusive partners (Wilson, 1997). By the year 1990, most states had adopted strong legislation to begin to reverse the history of domestic violence in this country. In 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Violence Against Women Act, which afforded some protection to women and children at the federal level (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997).

Social work practitioners must be aware of the detrimental affects of domestic violence for the woman involved in a romantic relationship. This study examines whether there is a difference between battered and nonbattered women regarding perceptions of relationship satisfaction.

### Perception

The concept of perception relates to the way one views a particular situation or issue. Often battered women hold traditional views about their roles in the home, as well as prescribing to feminine sex-roles stereotypes (Walker, 1979). Gender socialization and cultural norms influence the way women perceive and sustain their interpersonal relationships, particularly as it relates to the battered women (Woods, 1999). Walker (1979) supports this idea by ascertaining that battered women readily accept the notion that their place is in the home. Star, Clark, Goetz, O'Malia (1979) and Walker (1981) concluded that battered women hold extremely traditional views of sex-role functioning. Battered women also assume great responsibility of keeping the environment free of stress to ensure that the batterer does not become upset and act out violently

(Walker, 1981). In essence, many battered women believe if they appease the batterer or "walk on eggshells" that they will prevent further incidences of battering. Shir (1999) found in her study of battered women's perceptions and expectations of their current and ideal martial relationship, that battered women's faulty perceptions and low expectations may preclude victims from taking a stance in changing their plight, reduce the number of alternatives they are willing to consider, and further their entrapment and resignation to continue in unhealthy relationships. Shir also maintained that these conditions may affect battered women's likelihood of seeking professional assistance, as well as keeping them from doing what is necessary for their survival. Battered women perceptions about violence are shaped by their own diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, class, and sexual orientation experiences and expectations (Shir, 1999). Further, Turner (1986) asserted that separating from an abusive husband is a role loss, and often many battered women perceive it as a sign of personal failure. The clinical issues that practitioners will encounter when working with battered women include, but are not limited to, low self-esteem, denial, manipulation, passivity, and lack of body integration (Walker, 1981).

### Relationship Satisfaction and the Battered Woman

Relationship satisfaction can be described as the pleasure derived in a dyad relationship. It is convenient for battered women to deny or rationalize violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partner. Some domestic violence theorists have indicated that overall battered women perceive satisfaction in their relationship minus the violence. Beliefs about the value of relationships, coupled with emotions such as hope and loneliness, propel many battered women into staying with an abusive partner

(Johnson, Crowely, & Sigler, 1992). In many cultures, battered women and nonbattered woman alike agree that they should marry, take responsibility for the quality of their marital relationships, and remain with their husbands (Barnett, et al., 1997). Graham and Rawlings (1991) suggested that the battered women may even experience the Stockholm syndrome (bonding with the abuser) as a way to justify their relational satisfaction. For the most part, the battered woman loves her abusive partner and hopes that he will reform his abusive behavior. In a similar vein, many battered women are dissatisfied with their current abusive relationships, but they continue with the relationship to honor their commitments and societal cultural norms. To support this notion, Vaughn (1987) argued that both abusive and nonabusive relationships devise plausible reasons for preserving unhappy relationships, primarily because of the relationship commitment particularly as it relates to the battered woman. Meeks et al. (1998) asserted that relationship satisfaction is an important phenomenon because it has implications for relationship success and satisfaction. Social work practitioners should consider this notion as they work with battered women in clinical settings.

While there are limited empirical studies on relationship satisfaction among battered women, there have been a substantial number of studies on various aspects of relationship satisfaction. Oner (2000) examined the effects of relationship satisfaction and dating experience on future time orientation in relationships with the opposite sex. Data from a sample of 226 undergraduate students indicated that individuals who were highly satisfied in their relationships with the opposite sex tended to seek temporary relationships more and tended to be less future focused in their relationship than those who were less satisfied. Tucker and Anders (1999) investigated associations between

attachment style, partner perception accuracy, and relationship satisfaction in a sample of 61 undergraduate dating couples. Results indicated that more avoidantly attached men and more anxiously attached individuals of both sexes reported lower relationship satisfaction. Buunk and Mutsaers (1999) conducted a study among remarried individuals regarding their former and current marriages. The results showed equity in the former and the current marriage were not related to each other. These studies provide useful information regarding the ways in which dating relationships resemble and differ from violent marriages. Moreover, the researcher of this study believes the above mentioned studies can be generalized to the populations that are under current study.

### Theoretical Framework

The researcher recognizes that there are several theories developed to explain domestic violence. However, the theory most associated with this research is the learned helplessness theory.

Seligman (1975) formulated the original theory of learned helplessness by experimenting on dogs and rats. Seligman identified this behavior as learned helplessness. Similar experiments have been performed on humans with the same kind of results. The core of the theory holds that when people are faced with outcomes over which they have no control, despite their efforts, they develop a sense of helplessness (Seligman, 1975).

The learned helplessness theory has three basic components: information about what will happen; thinking or cognitive representation about what will happen (learning, expectation, belief, perception); and behavior toward what does happen. It is the second



expectation, belief, perception); and behavior toward what does happen. It is the second or cognitive representation component where the faulty expectation that response and outcome are independent occurs. This is the point at which cognitive, motivational, and emotional disturbances originate. It is important to realize that the expectation may or may not be accurate. Thus, if the person does have control over response-outcome variations but believes he or she does not, the person responds with the learned helplessness phenomenon (Walker, 1979). Lenore Walker first applied this concept for battered women to begin to conceptualize why they do not attempt to free themselves from battering relationships. Walker (1979) further maintained that once the battered women are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive and helplessness. This behavior is similar to Seligman's experiments with humans. He found in these experiments that feelings of helplessness among humans tends to spread from one specific aversive situation to another. Thus, women who have learned to expect battering as a way of life have learned that they cannot influence its occurrence. The battered woman believes that nothing she does will have an effect. The battered woman's sense of emotional well-being becomes precarious (Walker, 1979).

In 1980, Walker developed the cycle theory of violence (Glick, Berman, et al., 2000). She identified the cycle as having three phases: a) the tension building phase, b) the acute-battering phase, and c) the remorseful phase. In the tension building phase, minor incidents of violence may occur along with a buildup of anger. In the acute-battering phase, the major violent outburst occurs. In the remorseful phase, the batterer is remorseful, charming, and loving. Walker (1979) maintained that this cycle is

not present in all violent relationships. When the cycle is present, the three phases of abuse vary from couple to couple in terms of intensity and length. Walker further asserted that the remorseful phase tends to be most insidious. Often the battered woman is given false hope. It is paramount that social worker practitioners acquire a thorough understanding of the learned helplessness and cycle of violence theories in order to employ treatment modalities effectively.

### Definition of Terms

Battered Woman: A woman who is repeatedly subjected to any force or psychological behavior, usually by a man, in order to coerce her do something that he wants her to do without any concern for her rights.

Batterer: The person who inflicts the abuse.

Domestic Violence: Is the establishment of power and control through a pattern of coercive behaviors that include physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional assaults perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.

Nonbattered Woman: A woman who is not a victim of domestic violence.

Relationship Satisfaction: The gratification one obtains in an intimate relationship.

Perception: The capacity to comprehend or view an issue based on one's life experiences.

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is as follow:

Battered women experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction than nonbattered women.

The null hypothesis is as follows:

There will be no statistically significant difference in the level of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women.

### Variables

For the purpose of this study, domestic violence is the independent variable. The dependent variable is relationship satisfaction.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study was undertaken to determine if a relationship exists between the levels of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women. The study is predicated upon the assumption that battered women who experience domestic violence will experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction than nonbattered women. This study utilized an exploratory descriptive design. This research design was appropriately selected and utilized, primarily because after a careful literary search and numerous computer searches, the researcher found little literature, instruments, or measures that addressed the hypothesis of the study.

#### Description of the Setting

There were two groups of respondents for this study: battered and nonbattered women. The battered sample of women are participants in the New Connections to Work Program (NCTW). NCTW is a job readiness training program for battered women who are either unemployed or underemployed. There is no cost to enrolled participants and it is open to women who are battered and unemployed or underemployed. The training classes are offered at Gwinnett Technical College located in Lawrenceville, Georgia. The researcher facilitates the classes on a monthly basis.

The nonbattered women selected for this study were selected from an all women's community civic organization. This organization addresses community related issues and makes appropriate recommendations to elected officials. The group meets monthly in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

### Sampling

The population for this study involved all battered and nonbattered women. The sampling unit contained sixteen battered women and seventeen nonbattered women. A nonprobability purposive sampling was utilized for this study. The basis for selecting this particular sampling frame was due to the fact that the sample's population was convenient and readily accessible to the researcher.

As previously stated, this study consisted of two groups, sixteen battered women and seventeen nonbattered women. The sample of sixteen battered women all experienced an episode of domestic violence. This information was self-reported by the subjects. These respondents were all over the age of twenty-years old, with varied educational levels. The primary reason for their selection was their reported status as a victim of domestic violence.

The seventeen nonbattered women selected for this study were prominent women community leaders. These respondents were all over twenty, all African Americans with primarily advanced degrees. The reason for their selection in the sample was based on the researcher's assumption that this sample of women were not victims of domestic violence.

### Data Collection and Instrumentation Procedure

This study utilized a self-administered survey research questionnaire. It contained two parts: a section for respondents to indicate personal data, which consisted of their age, race or ethnicity, educational level, marital status, and number of children. The researcher also asked one question related to domestic violence. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) offers a good option for assessment of marital and other types of relationship satisfaction. This seven-item scale designed by Hendrick (1988) measures relationship satisfaction. The researcher slightly modified Hendrick's scale by adding an additional question and by formatting the items based on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5. The scale was modified to reflect the following: 1 = none of the time, 2 = very rarely, 3 = a good part of the time, 4 = most of the time, 5 = all of the time. According to Hendricks (1988), the RAS has an internal consistency alpha of .86. Similar to the alpha of .86, this study indicated an alpha of .87. This is a moderate level of reliability. The RAS also has a good concurrent validity, significantly distinguishing between couples who subsequently stayed together or broke up.

A number of relationship scholars have employed the measure successfully (Guldner & Swensen, 1995; Lamke et al., 1994; Sacher & Fine, 1996); however, the scale is unknown to many relationship researchers. To be considered an established rather than preliminary measure, Hendrick et al., (1998) asserted that a scale should show consistently sound psychometric properties across a number of studies. This research provides additional validity and reliability information on this scale, which adds to existing knowledge about the RAS.

To execute the study with the battered and nonbattered women's sample, the researcher had to get permission from the program's director and the civic organization's president to research the nonbattered women. Once approval was granted, potential participants were informed about the study and its purpose. The researcher informed respondents who agreed to participate in the study that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw their consent at any time without judgment or penalty. Additionally, they were informed that all information would be kept confidential and destroyed after the termination of the study. The researcher administered the questionnaire to each participant, and also entertained any questions that were raised. The time frame of the questionnaire was approximately 15 minutes. After completing the questionnaires, the respondents placed their completed surveys in a large envelope.

### Data Analysis

The data was coded and analyzed by the use of the statistical computer program package for Social Sciences Windows (SPSSWIN). The statistical analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistics which contained the frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics consisted of a Chi-Square analysis. The Chi-Square was selected based on the nonprobability sampling frame and measurement of the variables at nominal and ordinal level.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter contains the descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages, which were utilized to describe the data and the findings of the inferential statistical test, chi-square, which was utilized to test the hypothesis of the study. The chapter is organized by frequency distributions of the data related to the respondents' demographics and their levels of relationship satisfaction. The chapter then presents the chi-square analysis of the variables domestic violence: for battered and nonbattered and relationship satisfaction.

Table 1

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Age (N=33)

Age	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		Cum%
	N	%	N	%	
20-30	3	9.1	3	9.1	18.2
31-40	3	9.1	5	15.2	24.3
41-50	7	21.2	4	12.0	33.2
Over 51	3	9.1	5	15.2	24.3
Total	16	48.5	17	51.5	100.0
$\chi^2 = .233$		$df = 3$		$p > .617$	



As indicated in Table 1, 9.1% of battered and nonbattered women were between the ages of 20 to 30. Of the battered sample, 9.1% were between the ages of 31 to 40. The nonbattered sample ranging between the ages of 31 to 40 were 15.2 %. Of the battered population, 21.2% were between the ages of 41-50, while 15.2% were nonbattered. The battered women over 51 years of age were 9.1% and 15.2% were nonbattered women.

Table 1 further indicates that there is a moderate relationship ( $\phi = .233$ ) between age and battered and nonbattered women. When chi-square test was applied, the null hypothesis was accepted at ( $p > .617$ ) indicating that there was a statistical significant relationship between the variables.

Table 2

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Race or Ethnicity (N=33)

Race	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		Cum %
	N	%	N	%	
African American	10	30.3	17	51.5	81.8
Caucasian American	6	18.2	0	0	18.2
Total	16	48.5	17	51.5	100.0
$\phi = .486$		$df = 1$		$p < .005$	

As indicated in Table 2, African Americans represented 81.8% of the total population. Caucasian Americans comprised of 18.2% of the total population. Phi (.005) indicates that there is no relationship among variables. The chi-square (.005) denotes that there is no statistical relationship among variables.

Table 3

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Educational Level (N=33)

Education	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		Cum %
	N	%	N	%	
Below high school	2	6.1	0	0	6.1
High school graduate	1	3.0	1	3.0	6.1
Some college	4	12.1	4	12.1	24.2
College graduate	5	15.2	1	3.0	18.2
Some graduate school			5	15.2	15.2
Graduated degree	1	3.0	6	18.2	21.2
Other	3	9.0	0	0	9.0
Total	16	48.4	17	51.5	100.0
$\chi^2 = .701$		$df = 6$			$p < .013$

As indicated in Table 3, out of the total population 6.1% had less than a high school education. Of both battered and nonbattered, 3.0 % were high school graduates. Among both battered and nonbattered, 4.0 % had some college education. A little over 15% of battered women were college graduates, while 3.0% were nonbattered. Of the total population, 5.0% had some graduate school. The battered women made-up 3.0% of graduate degrees, while a little over 18% were nonbattered women. Of the battered sample, 9.0% indicated that they had some other form of education or training.

Phi (.701) shows there is a moderate relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.013) shows no statistical relationship.

Table 4

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Marital Status (N=33)

Marital Status	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		Cum %
	N	%	N	%	
Single	4	12.1	2	6.1	18.2
Married	4	12.1	11	33.3	45.4
Separated or divorced	8	24.2	4	12.1	36.4
		48.4			
Total	16		17	51.5	100.0
<hr/>					
$\phi = .399$		$df = 2$		$p > .073$	

As shown in Table 4, 12.1% of the battered were single or married, 24.2% were separated or divorced. Of the nonbattered women, 6.1 % were single, 33.3% were married and 12.1% were separated or divorced.

Phi (.399) shows there is a weak relationship between marital status among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.073) shows there is a statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 5

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Children (N=33)

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
Children	N	%	N	%	Cum %
0-2	8	24.2	12	36.4	60.6
3-5	7	21.2	5	15.2	36.4
Over 6	1	3.0	0	0	3.0
Total	16	48.4	17	51.6	100.0
<hr/>					
$\chi^2 = .253$			$df = 2$	$p > .349$	

As shown in Table 5, 24.2% of the battered have 0-2 children, 21.2% have 3-5 children and 3.0% have 6 or more children. Of the nonbattered, 36.4% have 0-2 children, and 15.2% have 3-5 children.

Table 6

Demographic Frequency Distributions: Domestic Violence Status (N=33)

Are you in a violent relationship?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
Yes	16	48.5	0	0	48.5
No	0	0	17	51.5	51.5
Total	16	48.5	17	51.5	100.0
$\phi = .1.000$		$df = 1$		$p < .000$	

As shown in Table 6, 48.5 % of respondents reported that they were in a violent relationship, while 51.5% reported that they were not in a violent relationship.

Phi shows that there is no relationship between variables, while chi-square (.000) shows that is no statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 7

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

How well does your partner meet your needs?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	2	6.1	1	3.0	9.1
Very rarely	5	15.2	2	6.1	21.2
A good part	5	15.2	4	12.1	27.3
of the time					
Most of the time	4	12.1	8	24.2	36.3
All of the time	0	0	2	6.2	6.1
Total	16	48.6	17	51.5	100.0
$\phi = .391$		$df = 2$		$p > .283$	

Of the 33 respondents, 15.2% of battered women reported that their partners met their needs very rarely, while nonbattered women reported 24.2% when asked the same question.

Phi (.391) shows there is a weak relationship between marital status among battered and nonbattered women, however, chi-square (.283) shows that there is a statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 8

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	0	0	0	0	0
Very rarely	5	15.2	1	0	18.2
A good part	7	21.2	4	12.1	33.3
of the time					
Most of the time	3	9.1	8	24.2	33.3
All of the time	1	3	4	12.1	15.2
Total	16	48.6	17	51.4	100.0
$\phi = .478$			$df = 3$		$p < .057$

As shown in Table 8, 21.2% of battered women reported that they were generally satisfied with their relationships a good part of the time, while nonbattered women reported 27.3% when asked the same question.

Phi (.478) shows there is a weak relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.057) shows no statistical relationship.



Table 9

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

I feel that our relationship is a good one.

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	1	3.0	0	0	3.0
Very rarely	4	12.1	2	6.1	18.2
A good part of the time	8	24.2	4	12.1	36.4
Most of the time	2	6.1	6	18.2	24.2
All of the time	1	3.0	5	15.2	18.2
Total	16	48.4	17	51.6	100.0
$\phi = .481$	$df = 4$		$p > .106$		

As shown in Table 9, 24.2% of battered women indicated that they felt that there relationship was a good one a good part of the time, while nonbattered women indicated 36.4% when asked the same question.

Phi (.481) shows there is a weak relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.106) shows that there is statistical relationship.

Table 10

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=32)

How often do you wish you had not gotten in this relationship?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	3	9.4	0	0	9.4
Very rarely	3	9.4	1	3.1	12.5
A good part of the time	7	21.9	3	9.4	31.3
Most of the time	2	6.2	7	21.9	28.1
All of the time	1	3.1	5	15.6	18.7
Total	16	50.0	16*	50.0	100.0
$\phi = .587$		$df = 4$		$p < .026$	

As shown in Table 10, 21.9% of battered women indicated that they wish that they had gotten in their relationship, while nonbattered women indicated 31.3% when asked the same question. \*Out of the seventeen nonbattered population, one respondent did not this answer this question.

Phi (.587) shows there is a moderate relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.026) shows no statistical relationship.

Table 11

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	2	6.1	1	3.0	9.1
Very rarely	7	21.2	2	6.1	27.3
A good part	4	12.1	4	12.1	24.2
of the time					
Most of the time	2	6.1	6	18.2	24.2
All of the time	1	3.0	4	12.1	15.2
Total	16	48.5	17	51.5	100.0
$\phi = .457$		$df = 4$		$p > .142$	

As shown in Table 11, of the battered women, 21.2% reported that their relationship has met their original expectations very rarely, while nonbattered women reported 24.2% when asked the same question.

Phi (.457) shows there is a weak relationship between marital status among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.142) shows there is a statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 12

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

How much do you love your partner?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	0	0	1	3.0	3.0
Very rarely	2	6.1	0	0	6.1
A good part of the time	6	18.2	4	9.1	27.3
Most of the time	5	15.2	6	9.1	24.2
All of the time	3	9.1	4	30.3	39.4
Total	16	48.5	17	51.5	100.0
$\phi = .500$			$df = 4$		$p < .083$

As shown in Table 12, out the battered women 18.2% reported that they loved their partner a good part of the time, while 30.3% nonbattered women reported that they loved their partner all of the time. Phi (.500) shows there is a moderate relationship between marital status among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.083) shows there is no statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 13

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=32)

I feel that I no longer care for my partner.

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	2	6.3	3	9.4	15.6
Very rarely	5	15.6	2	6.3	21.9
A good part	2	6.3	0	0	6.3
of the time					
Most of the time	5	15.6	3	9.3	25.0
All of the time	2	6.2	8	25.0	31.2
Total	16	50.0	16	50.0	100.0
$\phi = .487$		$df = 4$		$p < .108$	

As shown in Table 13, 15.6% of battered women reported that they felt that they very rarely felt that they no longer care for their partner, while nonbattered women reported 6.3 when asked the same question. Out of the seventeen nonbattered population, one respondent did not answer this question.

Phi (.487) shows there is a weak relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.108) shows no statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 14

Demographic Frequency Distributions: (N=33)

I feel that I would not choose the same partner if I had it to do over again?

	Battered Women		Nonbattered Women		
	N	%	N	%	Cum %
None of the time	7	21.9	2	6.3	28.1
Very rarely	2	6.3	2	6.3	12.5
A good part of the time	4	12.5	0	0	12.5
Most of the time	2	6.3	5	15.6	21.9
All of the time	1	3.0	7	21.8	25.0
Total	16	50.0	16	50.0	100.0
$\phi = .627$		$df = 4$		$p < .014$	

As shown in Table 14, 21.9% of battered women reported that they felt that none of the time would they choose the same partner if they had to do it over again, while nonbattered women reported 6.3% when asked the same question.

Phi (.627) shows there is a moderate relationship between education among battered and nonbattered women, where chi-square (.014) shows no statistical relationship among the variables.

Table 15

Chi-Square Analysis of Domestic Violence Status and Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	df	Chi-Square
How well does your partner meet your needs?	3	.391*
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	4	.478*
I feel that our relationship is a good one.	4	.481*
How often do you wish you had not gotten this relationship?	4	.587*
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	4	.457*
How much do you love your partner?	4	.500*
I feel that I no longer care for my partner.	4	.487*
I feel that I would not choose the same partner if I had it to do over again?	4	.627*

(p &gt; .05)

\* = Statistical significance at the .05 level

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a summary of the findings and conclusions of the study. The chapter is organized to present the study's hypothesis in relationship to the findings and inferential testing, with a discussion of the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

The study's null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in the level of relationship satisfaction among battered and nonbattered women. The chi-square analysis of variables related to domestic violence status and relationship satisfaction demonstrated a statistical significance at the .05 level among both groups. The results indicated in Table 15 shows that there is a relationship between domestic violence and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this proves that the null hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicated that both groups are similar in their levels of relationship satisfaction. Due to limited research studies, in the area of relationship satisfaction and the battered woman it is unknown whether or not this study's finding is supported in the literature.

The frequency distributions indicated that the respondents were between the ages of 20 to over 51 years of age. They were primarily African American, with a smaller percentage of Caucasian Americans. The majority were married, followed by separated or divorced, and single.



The greater percentage of respondents had some college education, with a lower percentage of high school graduates or having a below high school education. The greater percentage had between zero to two children, while a very small percentage had over six children.

The respondents were split into groups with 16 battered women and 17 nonbattered women. A greater percentage of respondents indicated that they were in a violent relationship, while a lower percentage indicated that they were in a violent relationship.

Regarding relationship satisfaction, respondents generally felt that their partner met their needs most of the time. Further, they reported that they were generally satisfied with their relationships most of the time. Respondents indicated that they felt that their relationship was a good one a good part of the time. A large percentage of respondents indicated most of the time that they wish they had not gotten into their relationship. The majority of respondents reported that their relationship met their original expectations very rarely. A larger percentage of the population indicated that they loved their partner all of the time. A great percentage of respondents indicated that all of the time they felt that they no longer care for their partner. Finally, a large number of respondents reported that they felt that they would not choose the same partner if they had it to do over again. The findings of this study are not completely consistent with previous studies on relationship satisfaction mainly because previous research studies have focused on satisfaction among marital or dating couples in nonviolent relationships.

### Limitations of the Study

In conducting this study, the limitations involved were the small sample size of only sixteen battered women and seventeen nonbattered women. This size sample prevents generalizing about the findings to the population as a whole, and restricts the findings to the respondents that were studied. Second, the sampling frame was a convenience sampling, a nonprobability sampling procedure. A probability sampling frame, such as random sampling, should have been conducted. Third, the battered women in the sample were all participants of a job-readiness training program. The researcher did not consider battered women who resided in a battered women's shelter. Battered women who terminated their battering relationship may experience lower relationship satisfaction than battered women who remain in their abusive relationships. Future studies regarding these variables should sample battered women residing in a battered women's shelter, rather than in a job training program.

### Suggested Research Directions

There is much to be learned about the battered women and relationship satisfaction. Further studies might examine perception of romantic relationships among married and dating battered women. Social work practitioners must focus on the development and validation of tools and methods that are most appropriate for working with this population. Examining relationship satisfaction among battered women warrants a greater empirical understanding through large and diverse samples. As stated

previously, the development, strengthening, and validation of tools and methods that address these gaps in the knowledge base are necessary.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The previous literature has clearly demonstrated that domestic violence is experienced by women of all races, ages, socioeconomic classes, and religious backgrounds. It poses a grave threat to the preservation of marital relationships.

Clinical social work practice with battered women requires awareness of the status and vulnerabilities of women in this contemporary society. Particularly since the field of domestic violence employs many different ideologies about how to address this issue (Sands, 2001). Therefore, it is paramount that social work practitioners consider multiple viewpoints and models that are empirically based to develop new and innovative helping strategies to serve this population. Furthermore, practitioners must have a sense of their personal beliefs and values as they address battered woman. They should demonstrate an open willingness to be advocates on behalf of the battered woman, as well as being sensitive to the client's choices regarding her own battered situation.

In being consistent with authors Davis and Hagen (1992), social work must commit itself to a model that focuses on the person-in-environment. If the profession takes this principle seriously, it will work to ensure adequate public funding for battered women's shelters and services needed to empower women to become self-sufficient.

Practitioners must continually assess how ideology affects both social policy and models that guides direct work with clients. Policies must be implemented and monitored on the mezzo and macro levels of the policy-making process.

It is important that practitioners keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to develop a unified theory of victimization and a comprehensive approach to assisting battered women. Moreover, a fundamental feature of comprehensive prevention and intervention services requires the delivery of services to minority ethnic groups. These services must be competent and culturally sensitive to treatment of clients with different cultural backgrounds. It is essential that information on safe houses, hotlines, and other resources for battered women are widely disseminated, and that they are culturally appropriate (Short, McMachon, et al., 2000). Effective intervention strategies with battered women from all racial backgrounds incorporate education about battering and providing emotional support. Worldwide, social workers of the twentieth-first century must continue to increase public awareness about the plight of battered women.

Social workers must also keep in mind that defining the term domestic violence is inherently problematic. Definitions are subjective and constantly changing. Although terms like abuse, battering, and assault are often used as if everyone agrees on their meaning, it is important to recognize that no such consensus exists (Barnett, et al., 1997). Therefore, the social work profession must define domestic violence to lead other professionals in creating a consensus on how to define domestic violence.

Straus and Gelles (1988) asserted that domestic violence has become woven into the fabric of this society, and to prevent it, professionals must be prepared to alter fundamentally the core values, norms, and allocation of resources that contribute to the

harmful extent of violence in the home. Although many advances have been made in the field of domestic violence, many human service professionals continue to condone violence through their silence while victims are struggling to free themselves from their own personal violence. It is time for social workers and other professional alike to take a leap to support battered women in enjoying equality and achieving full human rights (MacKay, 1992).

Much has been accomplished in bringing about changes in working with battered women. However, with combined efforts of social workers and other helping professionals and an enlightened citizenry, violence against women will be better understood and the future of these women will be safer, happier, and more promising (Thorman, 1980).

## Appendices



Whitney M. Young, Jr.  
School of Social Work

## APPENDIX A: CONSENT LETTER

### CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

Dear Research Participants:

I am a graduate student at the Clark Atlanta University's, Whitney M. Young Jr. School of Social Work, Atlanta, Georgia. The subject of my Master's Thesis is: "An Exploratory Descriptive Study Regarding Perceptions of Relationship Satisfaction Among Battered and Nonbattered Women".

As a part of this research project, you are being asked to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the facilitator when completed. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw your consent at any given time without penalty. There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

I assure you that all information collected in this study will be completely confidential. In all written material and/or oral presentation in which I might use material from the questionnaire that you have filled out, I will not use your name or any other identifying information. If I were to use materials in any way that is not consistent with what is stated above, I would ask for your additional consent. All questionnaires will be destroyed upon completion of this project.

In signing this form, you are also assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material that you submit on the questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

*Atasha M. Murray*  
Atasha M. Murray  
Investigator

*Hattie Mitchell*  
Professor Hattie Mitchell  
Thesis Advisor

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Formed in 1988 by the consolidation of Atlanta University, 1865, and Clark College, 1869



## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please answer all the questions by placing an X by the appropriate response.

### Demographic Data:

1. What is your age?  
☐ Less than 20  
☐ 20-30 years old  
☐ 31-40 years old  
☐ 41-50 years old  
☐ Over 51
2. What is your race or ethnicity?  
☐ African American  
☐ Caucasian American  
☐ Hispanic American  
☐ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your highest level of education?  
☐ Below high School  
☐ High school graduate  
☐ Some college  
☐ College graduate  
☐ Some graduate school  
☐ Graduate degree  
☐ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your marital status?  
☐ Single  
☐ Marriage  
☐ Separated or divorced  
☐ Widowed
5. How many children do you have?  
☐ 0-2 children  
☐ 3-5 children  
☐ Over 6 children
6. Are you in a violent relationship?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No

**RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE (RAS)**

Adapted from: Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 93-98.

This questionnaire is designed to measure relationship satisfaction. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and as accurately as you can by placing the appropriate letter beside each item as follows.

- A= None of the time
- B= Very rarely
- C= A good part of the time
- D= Most of the time
- E= All of the time

- 
- 7. \_\_\_\_ How well does your partner meet your needs?
  - 8. \_\_\_\_ In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
  - 9. \_\_\_\_ I feel that our relationship is a good one.
  - 10. \_\_\_\_ How often do you wish you had not gotten in this relationship?
  - 11. \_\_\_\_ To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
  - 12. \_\_\_\_ How much do you love your partner?
  - 13. \_\_\_\_ I feel that I no longer care for my partner.
  - 14. \_\_\_\_ I feel that I would not choose the same partner if I had it to do over again.

**End of Questionnaire! Thank you for your time and participation**

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